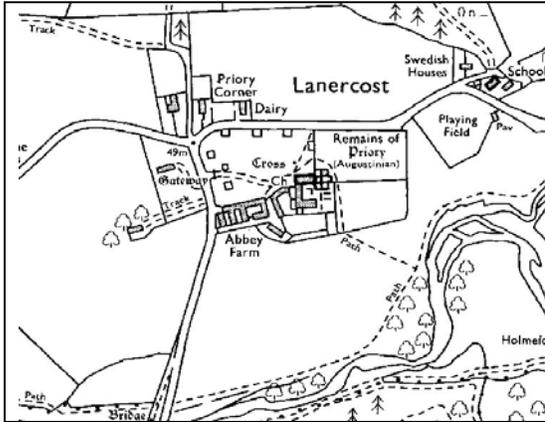


# LANERCOST PRIORY, Cumbria



## Archaeological Watching Brief



**Oxford Archaeology North**

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**McAlpine Utilities**

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## SUMMARY

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An archaeological watching brief was carried out by Oxford Archaeology North (OA North) in September 2003 at Lanercost Priory, Cumbria (NY 556 637). The work took place on behalf of McAlpine Utilities during excavation of a pipe trench along the north and west sides of the priory grounds.

The priory is a Scheduled Ancient Monument, SAM Cumbria 301 ([www.english.gov.uk/reports/lanercost](http://www.english.gov.uk/reports/lanercost)). Although the pipeline lies outside of the scheduled area, it was necessary that an archaeological watching brief be carried out in order to ascertain the presence or absence of any remains relating to the priory or other phases of activity in the area.

Much of the pipe trench was excavated through ground disturbed by earlier pipe trenches and the unclassified B road from Brampton to Birdoswald. However, even in undisturbed areas no archaeological remains of any significance were encountered indicating that the extant northern and western boundaries of the priory have remained relatively unchanged.

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Oxford Archaeology North would like to thank McAlpine Utilities for commissioning the project and for help in it's initial stages.

Paul Gajos undertook the watching brief and compiled the report. Emma Carter produced the drawings. Alison Plummer managed the project and edited the report together with Emily Mercer.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

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### 1.1 CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE PROJECT

1.1.1 Oxford Archaeology North was commissioned to undertake an archaeological watching brief during the excavation of 150m of pipe trench in the road and verge around Lanercost Priory, Cumbria (Fig 2). The trench was situated outside of the present priory grounds, running along the eastern side of the road from Abbey Farm, turning to the east around Priory corner and terminating just beyond the extant graveyard. The work was carried out in September 2003.

### 1.2 LOCATION, TOPOGRAPHY AND GEOLOGY

1.2.1 The site of Lanercost Priory is situated on the northern edge of the flood plain of the River Irthing, north-east of Brampton, Cumbria (centred on NY 556 637) (Fig 1).

1.2.2 The geology underlying the site is very mixed, consisting of well-drained coarse loamy and sandy soils of the Wick 1 association over Holocene river terrace drift and Pleistocene glacial deposits of sand, gravel and boulder clay (glacial till). These drift deposits are formed on top of Lower Carboniferous Limestone bedrock of the Birdoswald Limestone Group (British Geological Survey, 1980).

### 1.3 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

1.3.1 Lanercost Priory was founded by the Augustinians in 1166 under the patronage of Robert de Vaux, Lord of Gilsland, and was completed in 1220. The priory remained in use for some 370 years until the Dissolution of the Monasteries by Henry VIII in 1536. Following the Dissolution the buildings were under the ownership of Thomas Dacre of Naworth Castle. Although he converted the west range into a residence most of the remaining buildings fell into disrepair. Around 1740 the nave was acquired by the parish and was restored for use as a church (Greene 1992). The general lay out of the buildings is shown in Figure 2, the church lies in the centre of the grounds with a graveyard to the north-east and an area laid to pasture to the north-west and south-east. The west range is situated to the south-west of the church with Abbey farm to its west. A wall encloses the whole Priory complex.

1.3.2 A geophysical study of the grounds of Lanercost Priory was undertaken in 1992 at the request of English Heritage, who own the site. No features were identified extending into the area of the watching brief ([www.english.gov.uk/reports/lanercost](http://www.english.gov.uk/reports/lanercost)).

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## 2. METHODOLOGY

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### 2.1 PROJECT DESIGN

2.1.1 A project design (*Appendix 1*) for an archaeological watching brief of the study area was submitted by Oxford Archaeology North (OA North) in accordance with a verbal brief from Jeremy Parsons of Cumbria County Council Archaeology Service (CCCAS). Following formal approval of the project design by CCCAS, OA North was commissioned by McAlpine Utilities to undertake the work. The project design was adhered to in full, and the work was consistent with the relevant standards and procedures of the Institute of Field Archaeologists and with generally accepted best practice.

### 2.2 WATCHING BRIEF

2.2.1 A permanent archaeological presence was maintained during all excavations concerning the laying of the new pipe.

2.2.2 Recording was by means of OA North's standard context recording system, with trench records and supporting registers and indices. A full photographic record in colour transparency and monochrome formats was made. Section drawings and plans were made of relevant areas of the trenches at appropriate scales. The trenches were located using taped measurements from existing walls.

### 2.3 ARCHIVE

2.3.1 A full archive has been compiled in accordance with the project design (*Appendix 1*), and in accordance with current IFA and English Heritage guidelines (English Heritage 1991). The paper and digital archive will be deposited with the appropriate museum.

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## 3. RESULTS

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### 3.1 WATCHING BRIEF

- 3.1.1 The excavated pipe trench measured 0.5m wide by approximately 1m deep and 400m in length. The first section of the pipe trench, positioned to the west of the Priory grounds, was excavated through the existing surface of an unclassified B road (Fig 2). Along the northern side of the Priory grounds the pipe trench was excavated through the grass verge on the line of, and through the backfill of, a pre-existing pipe. The underlying stratigraphy consisted of hardcore or turf and topsoil to a maximum depth of 0.3m overlying the natural sand and gravel.
- 3.1.2 No archaeological features, finds or deposits were encountered. Any potential archaeological features or deposits in the area are likely to have been removed by the previous disturbance to this area.

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## 4. DISCUSSION

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- 4.1 No features or deposits relating to the priory or any other phases of activity in the area were revealed during the monitoring of the ground works. This may be partly due to the fact that much of the pipe trench was excavated through previous pipe trenches and the road. The disturbance of the ground in both instances is likely to have removed any archaeological deposits. However, it may also indicate that the extant boundaries of the grounds around the north and west sides of the priory (Fig 2) have remained relatively unchanged and that little, if any activity which would leave traces in the archaeological record has ever occurred in this area. This corroborates the findings of the 1992 geophysical survey.

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## BIBLIOGRAPHY

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British Geological Survey, 1980 Geological Map, Sheet 18, Brampton, 1:50000 drift edition

English Heritage, 1991 *Management of Archaeological Projects*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn. London

Patrick Greene, 1992, *Medieval Monasteries*, London

[www.eng-h.gov.uk/reports/lanercost](http://www.eng-h.gov.uk/reports/lanercost)

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## APPENDIX 1: PROJECT DESIGN

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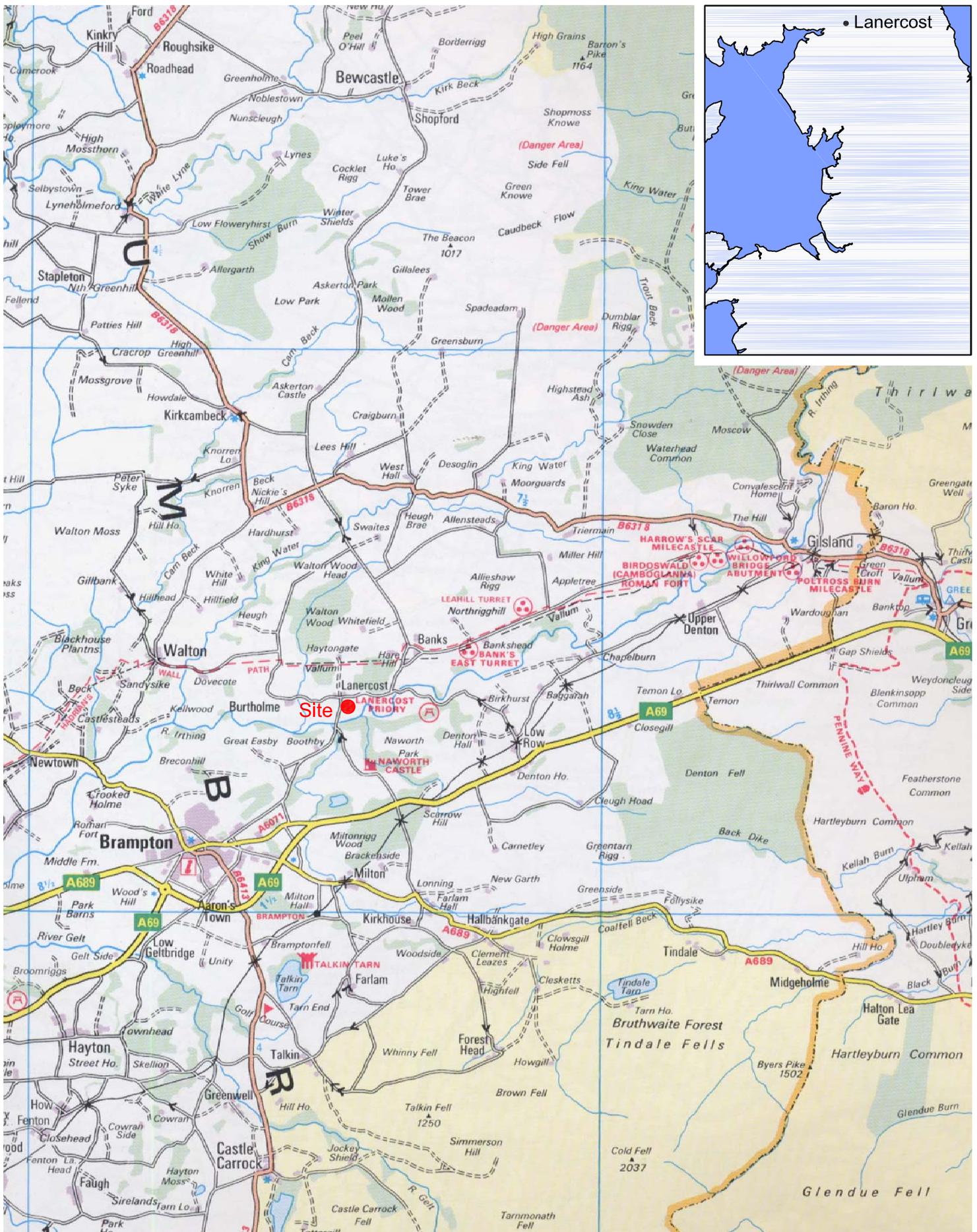
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Figure 1: Location map

Figure 2: Area of archaeological monitoring

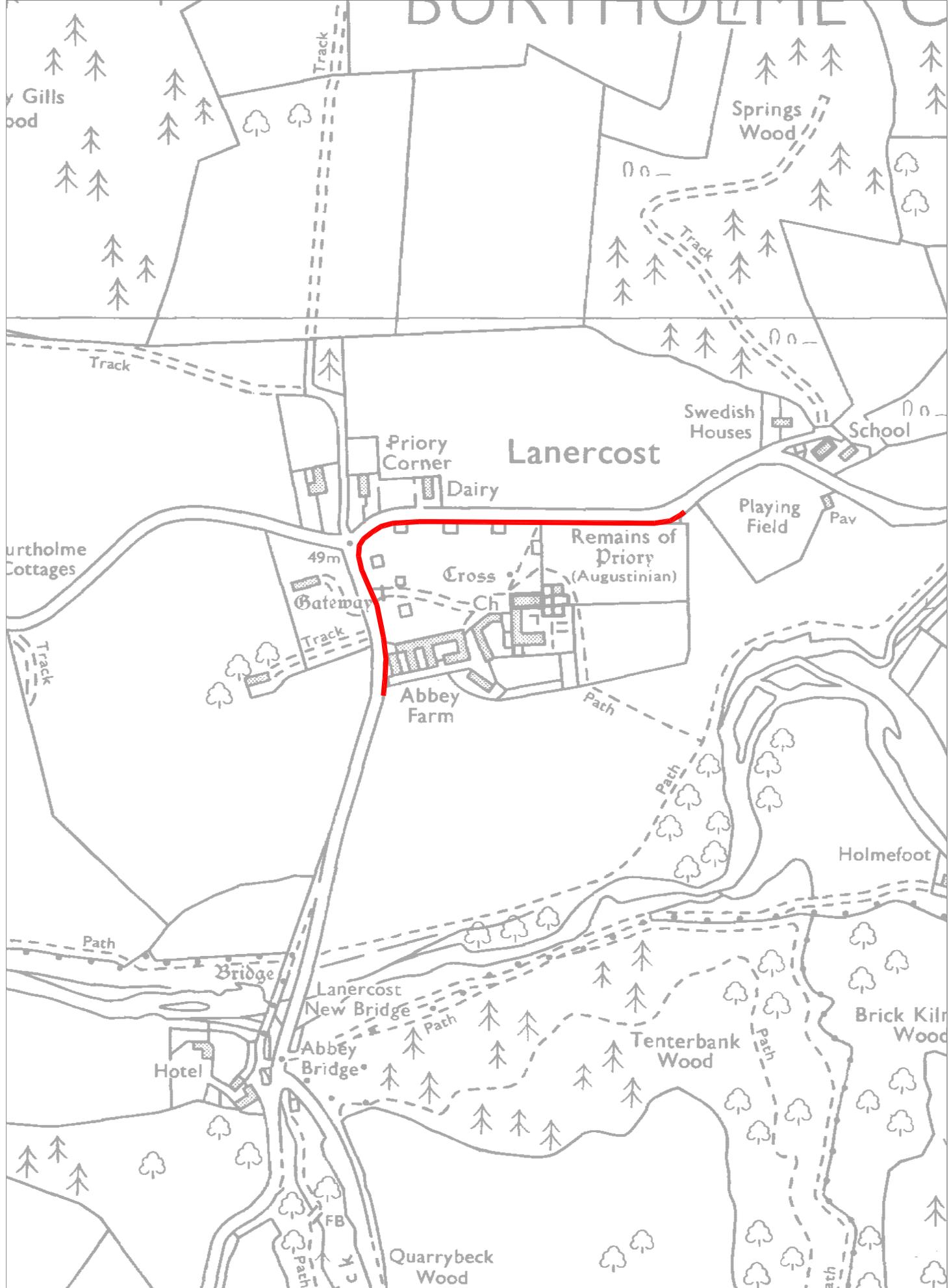


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0 5000  
 metres

Figure 1: Location Map



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 area of archaeological monitoring

0  100m  
 Scale 1:5000



Figure 2 : Area of archaeological monitoring